

## **Big Brothers Big Sisters New "Pass It On" Program Receives \$250,000 Grant from the National Shooting Sports Foundation**

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To: National Desk

Contact: Jodi Valenta of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, 201-426-1320 or [jvalenta@nssf.org](mailto:jvalenta@nssf.org) Cara Kliewer of Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters, 316-290-8878 or [CKliewer@ksbbbs.org](mailto:CKliewer@ksbbbs.org)

NEWTOWN, Conn., Feb. 21 /U.S. Newswire/ -- The National Shooting Sports Foundation has awarded Big Brothers Big Sisters \$250,000 to expand their Pass It On program. The program, which teaches youth traditional outdoor sports, such as target shooting, hunting, archery and fishing, pairs youth with adults who also enjoy these activities. The program has grown rapidly and is already offered through Brothers Big Sisters chapters in Kansas, Texas, Pennsylvania, Oregon and California. Eight more states are expected to adopt the program in the coming months.

"So many of our youngsters ask to participate in outdoor activities, but it was difficult to find knowledgeable adults to mentor them" said Mike Christensen, director of outdoor mentoring projects for Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters, the chapter where the program was first launched. "By recruiting volunteers with these skills, we can give the kids what they want while at the same time reach out to a group that may not have known how to translate their skills into useful volunteer opportunities."

The partnership between NSSF and BBBS identifies youngsters with an interest in the outdoors and matches them up with target shooters, hunters, archers and anglers who want to make a difference in someone's life.

Through the Pass It On program, boys and girls are matched with mentors who provide them with positive experiences and a unique opportunity to build respect for the outdoors. The program is supported through NSSF's STEP OUTSIDE program in which the organization introduces traditional outdoor sports to those who don't ordinarily have the opportunity to get involved in these activities.

"By helping this program grow into a nationwide effort, thousands of children will develop a love of outdoor activities and an appreciation of wildlife," said Jodi Valenta, director of recruitment and retention for NSSF. "In fact, we so strongly believe in the value of this program and the benefits it brings to children that we have made a concrete investment toward the program's success."

"We already have a groundswell of supportive partners, including manufacturers and retailers, state fish and wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, sportsmen's clubs, and other groups that have committed their support and participation to this program," said Valenta. "Now we ask the entire conservation community to get involved by becoming mentors so that the program can continue to grow." For more information, visit <http://www.nssf.org> or <http://www.passiton.ksbbbs.org>.

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The National Shooting Sports Foundation awarded a \$250,000 grant to Big Brothers Big Sisters to assist in expanding their outdoor mentors program, Pass It On. This program teaches youth how to participate in traditional outdoor sports, such as target shooting, hunting, archery and fishing, by pairing them with adults who also enjoy these activities.

#### Quick Facts

-- Pass It On was launched in 2000, when Steve Williams, then secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and now director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, approached the Sedgwick County chapter of BBBS to involve children in traditional outdoor sports.

-- In 2002, NSSF awarded Kansas BBBS a grant for \$35,000 as part of an initial partnership to expand the program in that state. Because NSSF so believes in the value of this program, they awarded \$250,000 in 2003 to help expand its reach.

-- Pass It On programs have been launched by other BBBS chapters in Texas and Pennsylvania. Oregon, California and up to eight additional chapters across the country will implement the program in 2004.

-- To date, over 1,000 "Littles" have been involved with Pass It On activities, sharing the activity one-on-one with a mentor.

-- In 2004, the Pass It On Outdoor Mentors program plans to involve more than 2,500 "Littles" throughout Kansas, Pennsylvania and Texas.

-- "Littles" who express an interest in shooting and hunting activities receive hands-on training in safety as required by state wildlife agency regulations.

-- Little Brothers and Sisters are more confident in their performance at school and are able to get along better with their family (Public/Private Ventures, 2003). They are also:

46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs

27 percent less likely to begin using alcohol

52 percent less likely to skip school

37 percent less likely to skip a class -- Up to 86 percent of men, women, and children invited to participate in traditional outdoor sports, such as shooting, fishing, hunting or archery, accepted the invitation. (Responsive Management, Report on Hunting, Shooting Sports, Fishing and Archery Participation, 2002)

-- The majority of those introduced to traditional outdoor sports by a mentor continue to participate in those sports.

-- If invited, 31 million men and 17 million women would accept an invitation to go target shooting.

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The National Shooting Sports Foundation is the leading trade association of the firearms and recreational shooting sports industry. A non-profit communication and marketing organization

formed in 1961, the NSSF manages a variety of programs designed to promote a better understanding of and a more active participation in the shooting sports.

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